

# RECREATIONAL RESOURCES INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

## Summary of Activities and Park Visitation

Tables 2 and 3 define the regular activities taking place within the Jacob Fork section of the park. Annual use records, available from the park for 2000 through 2006, provide a summary of total visitors each month of the year for certain activities. Annual totals are represented here. Camping data is based on receipts. A traffic counter is located on the entrance road that records all vehicles entering and leaving the park. The multiplier of traffic counts for total attendance is based on an average of four people per car and is divided by two, to account for entrance and exit of one vehicle. Approximately 10% of visitors fish, 72% hike, and 41% picnic.

Overall park attendance, picnicking, hiking, and fishing increased by around 20% between 2000 and 2006. Primitive camping and backcountry camping combined have increased by more than 40%. Interpretive program participation decreased from 2001 to 2005 and then showed a strong increase of more than 40% from 2005 to 2006 due to an increase in numbers of programs.

**Table 2: Annual State Park Use Record** (Jacob Fork Section only)

Activity	Year of Record						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*	2005	2006
	<i>Total Vehicles Entering Park</i>						
Total Attendance	159,580	186,242	167,509	183,792	49,194	192,440	205,814
	<i>Total Individual Participants in Activity</i>						
Fishing (trout fishing)	17,317	19,559	17,588	20,540	5,833	20,203	21,573
Hiking	114,897	134,095	120,607	132,329	35,419	138,554	147,777
Interpretive Programs	3,944	4,135	3,591	3,510	1,058	2,158	5,607
Picnicking	65,830	78,945	82,227	75,816	20,296	79,385	84,652
Horse Camping	--	171	480	939	118	708	1,236
Backcountry Camping	--	1,263	1,276	2,750	386	2,247	2,246
Primitive Camping	--	5,301	5,179	3,137	421	3,504	4,065

\*Totals for 2004 were lower than preceding years due to a park closure due to a landslide event.



Day hiking

Monthly visitation, on average, was highest from April through July and lowest in December and January. The South Mountains State Park General Management Plan (NC DEHNR, 1993) states an eight-month peak season for the park, from March through October. Totals for peak season months appears to have doubled since 1990, based on the visitation trends reported in the general management plan.

The park is well known for its equestrian facilities, including trails and campground. According to park staff, equestrian trail usage numbers have not been documented, and would be difficult to document since equestrians have historically accessed the park lands from other areas in addition to the main entry in the Jacob Fork section of the park. The most riding activity occurs in the spring and fall, though equestrians do ride year round if the weather is favorable.



**Backpacking**



**Small waterfall in Jacob Fork Section**

**Table 3: Other Activities in Jacob Fork Section**

*(not tracked in annual use records)*












Backcountry Backpacking
Backcountry Camping
Day Visitation to View Waterfall
Equestrian Camping
Group Camping
Horseback Riding
Mountain Biking
Nature Photography
Self-Guided Nature Interpretation















**Typical primitive campsite, Jacob Fork Primitive Campground**

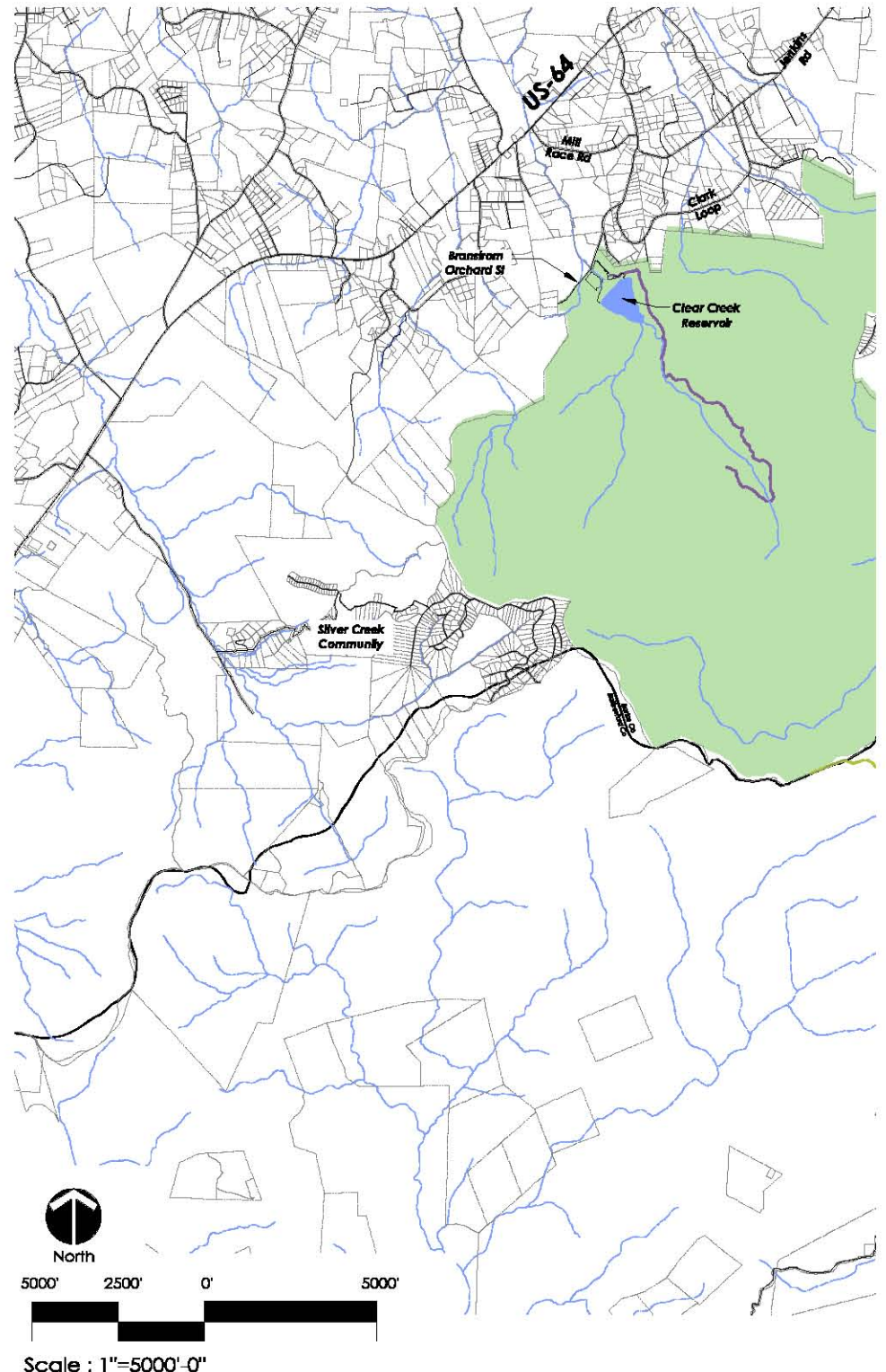


# Map Legend

	South Mountains State Park
	County Boundary
	Roads
	Property Parcels
	Water Bodies
	Accessible Trail
	Biking Trail
	Equestrian Trail
	Hiking Trail
	Parking
	Primitive Camping

Trail Name	Miles	 Hiking	 Equestrian	 Biking	 Accessible
Benn Knob Trail	3.0	●	●	●	
Chestnut Knob Trail	2.1	●			
Dogwood Trail	2.6	●	●	●	
Fox Trail	3.6	●	●		
Headquarters Trail	4.3	●	●	●	
Hemlock Nature Trail	0.3	●			●
High Shoals Falls Loop	1.2	●			
Horseshoe Trail	3.3	●	●		
Jacob Branch Trail	1.1	●			
Jacob Fork River Trail	0.5	●			
Little River Trail	2.0	●	●		
Lower CCC Trail/Road	2.5	●	●	●	
Possum Trail	1.5	●			
Raven Rock Trail	1.9	●	●		
Sawtooth Trail	2.5	●	●		
Shinny Trail	2.2	●			
Short Trail	0.7	●			
Turkey Ridge Trail	1.7	●	●		
Upper CCC Trail/Road	1.6	●	●		
Upper Falls Trail	1.8	●	●	●	

Trail Symbol	 Hiking	 Equestrian	 Biking	Interim
	●			
	●	●		
	●	●	●	
	●		●	
				●





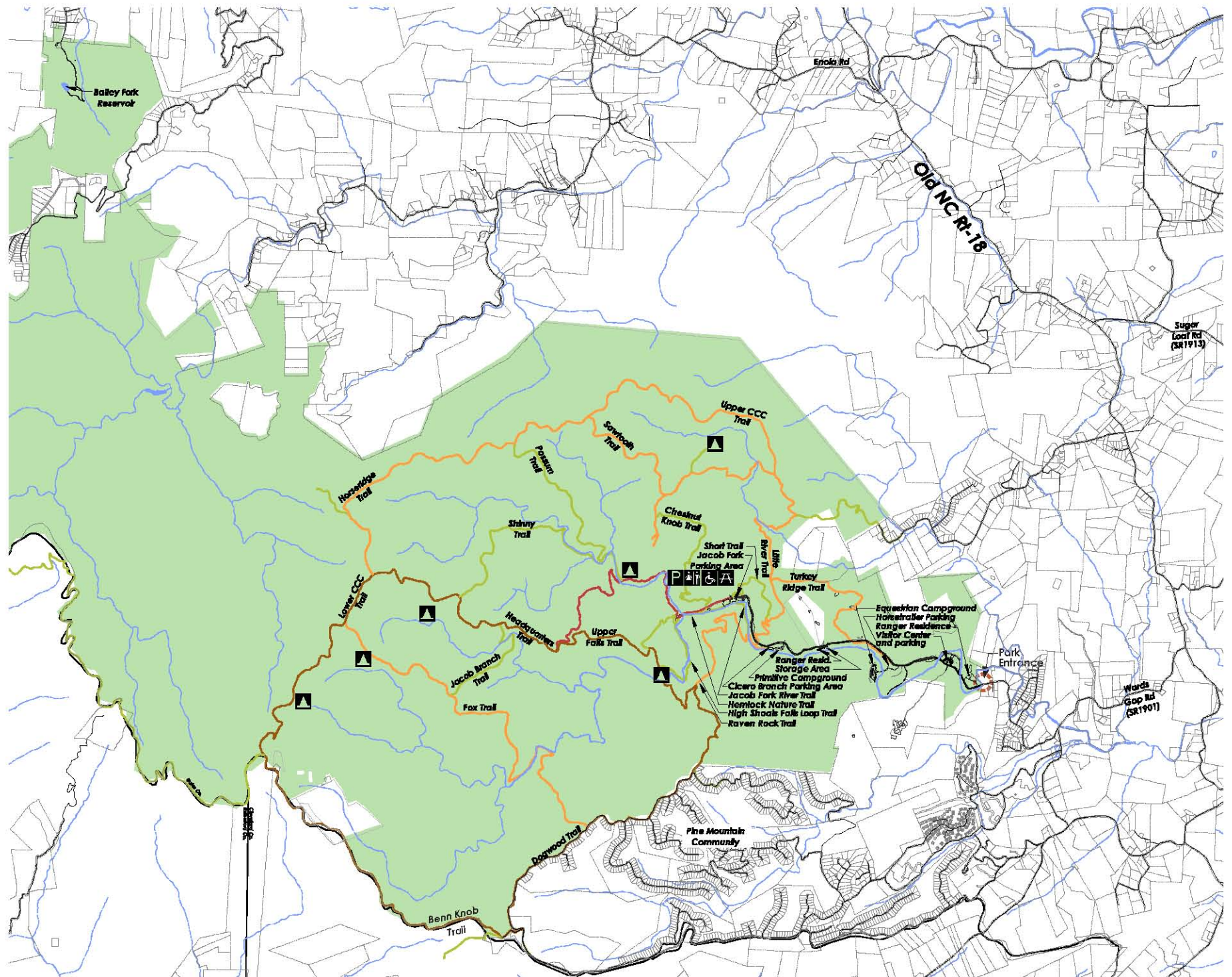


Figure 6: Existing Uses and Internal Circulation  
October 2006



## Existing Internal Circulation, Infrastructure and Activities within each Section of the Park

Figure 6 illustrates uses and internal circulation for the entire park. The following sections describe in more detail infrastructure, facilities, and circulation existing in South Mountains State Park at the time of development of this master plan.

### Jacob Fork Section





Figure 7 illustrates the existing infrastructure, facilities, uses and circulation in the Jacob Fork section of the park in close proximity to South Mountain Park Avenue.

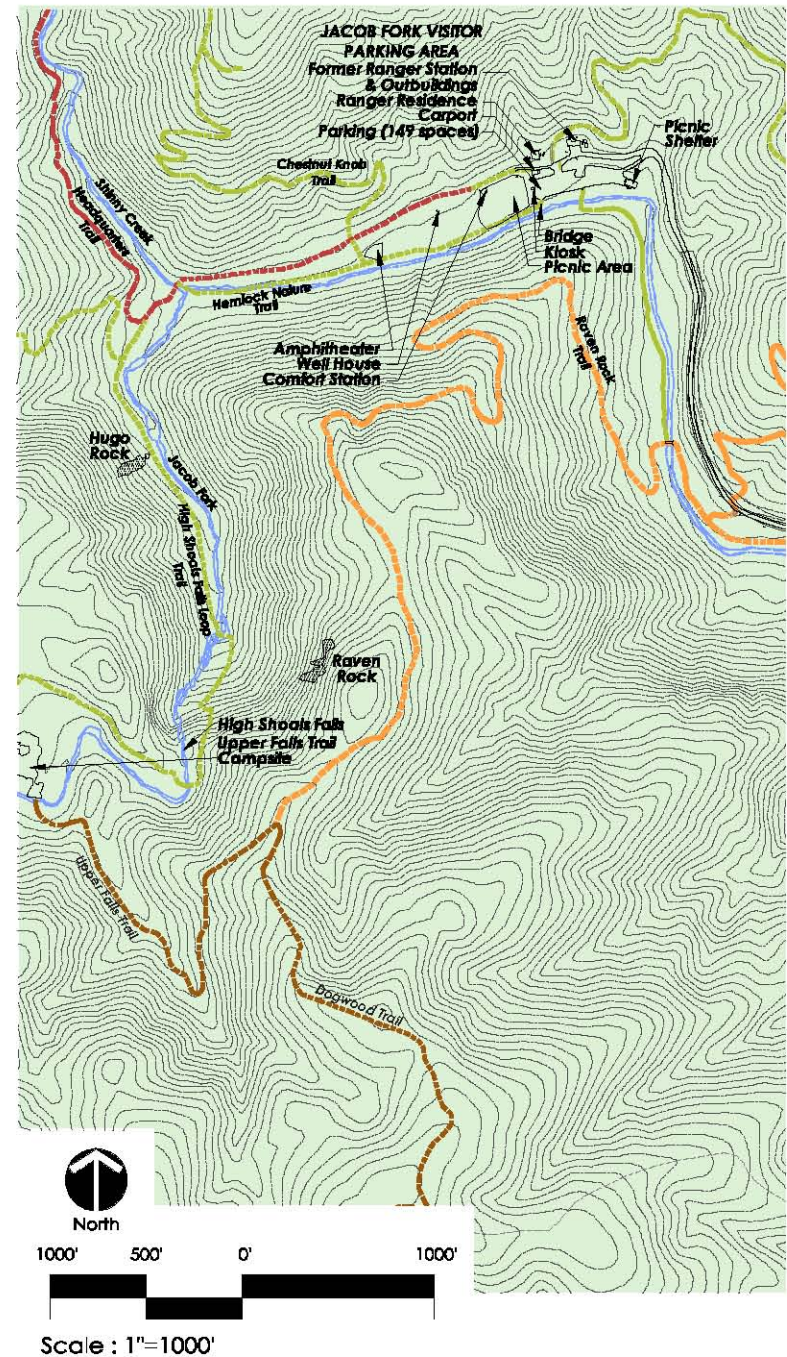
Access to the Jacob Fork section of the park is provided by South Mountain Park Avenue (SR 1904). This road provides the primary visitor vehicular circulation in the Jacob Fork section of the park. Other secondary circulation is provided through parking areas for the visitor center and Jacob Fork trailheads area as well as through the campgrounds.

Near the gated entry to the park, a driveway to the north provides access to a ranger residence. Three bridges provide access over Jacob Fork, with parking and a driveway for the South Mountains State Park Visitor Center on the north side of South Mountain Park Avenue between the last two bridges.

Farther west on South Mountain Park Avenue, on its south side, is an approximately 1½-acre horse-trailer parking area. The gravel lot is not striped, and a portion is used at times for gravel storage. An

Map Legend

Trail Symbol	Hiking	Equestrian	Biking
	•		
	•	•	
	•	•	•
	•		•





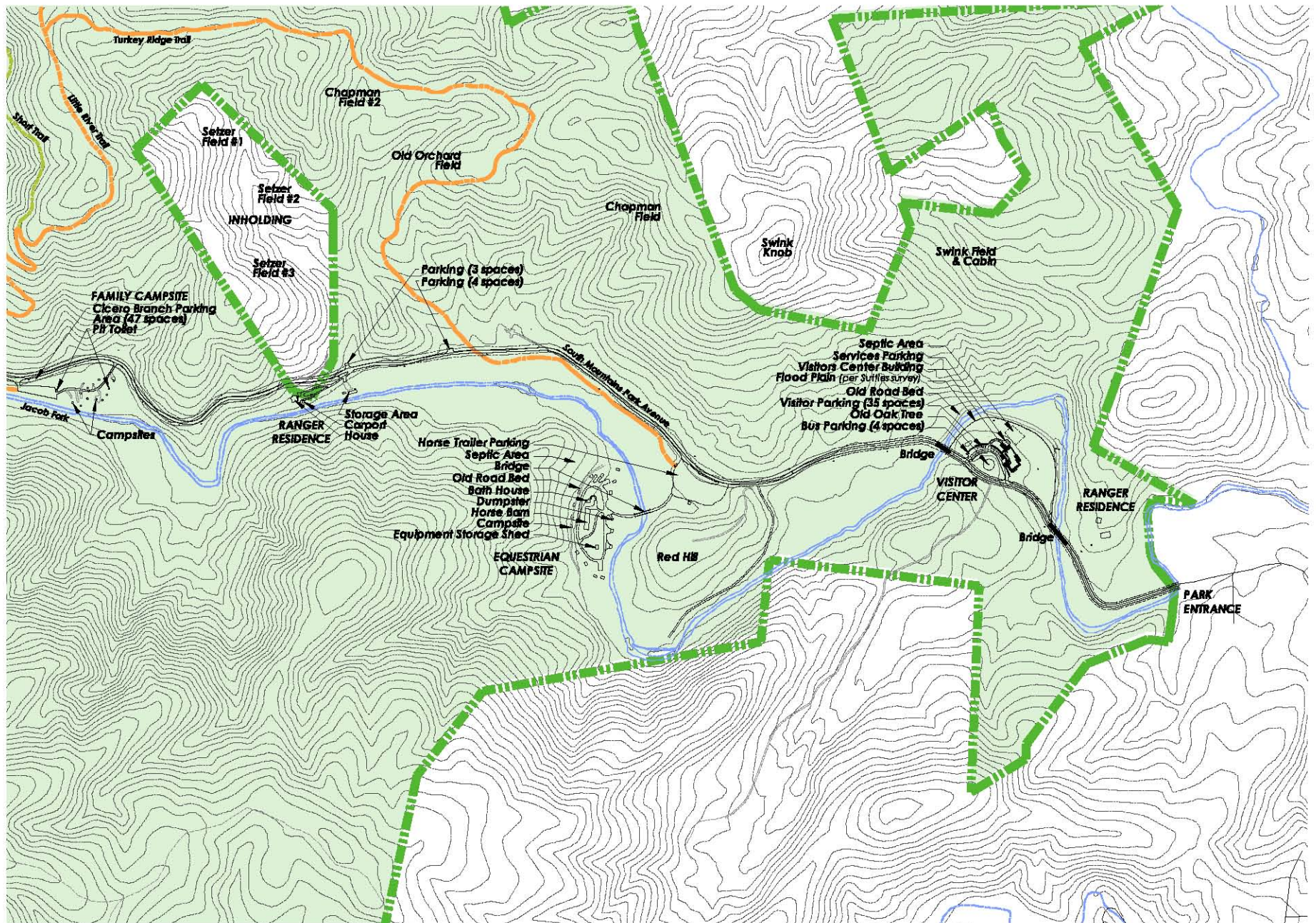


Figure 7: **South Mountains State Park Jacob Fork Section**  
**Detail - Existing Infrastructure, Uses and Internal Circulation**  
 20' Contour Interval, January 2007



estimate of ‘parking spaces’ is not feasible. With the exclusion of outer edges of the space to allow for circulation, it is estimated that approximately three-quarters to one acre of land is available for parking. Park staff reports that this parking lot has held upwards of 35-40 trailer rigs. A small building containing two pit toilets flanks this parking area to the south. A bridge, leading to the equestrian campground, is located to the southwest of the parking area.

The equestrian campground consists of 15 campsites, a 33-stall barn, and a bathhouse with flush toilets and hot showers. Each campsite has a parking area, picnic table, tent pad, and grill. Potable water spigots are located throughout the campground.

Going west along South Mountain Park Avenue, a ranger residence and park storage area are adjacent to the road to the south.

Farther west on South Mountain Park Avenue, again on its south side, is the existing primitive campground. It consists of 11 campsites, each with a picnic table and grill. Two pit toilet facilities and drinking water are provided in this area. The Cicero Branch Parking Area connects to this campground to its west.

The Jacob Fork parking area is located at the end of South Mountain Park Avenue. This parking area is flanked by a picnic shelter, the former park office and interim maintenance facility, a ranger residence, and trail heads into the park.

The Jacob Fork picnic shelter contains 12 tables and four grills. It has electric service and is used by park staff to provide interpretive presentations to visiting groups.

A second picnic area is located just beyond a kiosk at the end of the parking lot between the Headquarters Trail and the Hemlock Nature Trail. This picnic area has 12 tables and nine grills. A restroom facility is located adjacent to the picnic area.

The Hemlock Nature Trail connects to Headquarters Trail about three-tenths of a mile from the Jacob Fork parking area. The Hemlock Nature Trail follows Jacob Fork with several overlooks for fishing and nature viewing. Several informational kiosks and display areas are provided for the visitor along this trail. A rustic amphitheater is located in this vicinity as well.



**Hemlock Nature Trail, August 2006.**

A third picnic area is located approximately one-half mile down the Headquarters Trail and consists of four tables and three grills.

Headquarters Trail connects to High Shoals Falls Loop which leads the visitor to one of the park’s most visited attractions, High Shoals Falls. Access to the falls on one side of the loop is up numerous boardwalks and steps. The falls plummet 80 feet over bare rock, with several cascades below.

Many of the other park trails are accessed off of Headquarters Trail and High Shoals Falls Loop. Most of these trails were sited on old road beds. In total, seventeen trails encompass 42 total miles. All trails are open for hiking. Bridle trails total 29 miles. For mountain bikers, there is also a strenuous 18-mile loop trail.

Other park facilities include a total of 20 backpack camping sites in six locations in the Jacob Fork section of the park. Each location integrates a pit toilet nearby. Four camping sites are also provided for group camping off of Shinnick Creek Trail.



**Boardwalk to High Shoals Falls, August 2006.**



**Upper Falls Campsite, August 2006.**

In summary, the primary activities occurring in the Jacob Fork section of the park include hiking, backpacking, picnicking, trout fishing, camping (including backcountry camping), horseback riding and equestrian camping, mountain biking, and natural heritage interpretation and nature appreciation.

### *Henry Fork Section*

Currently, the Henry Fork watershed portion of the park has limited access to the public. There are some existing 'named' trails/old roads within this area, predominantly representing old logging roads and surveillance roads for patrolling the area when the reservoir was utilized as the Morganton water supply. However, no trails are maintained for public use at this time.

No known buildings exist in this section of the park. There is an old reservoir that formerly served the city of Morganton, now known as the Henry Fork Reservoir. It is two to three acres in size and approximately 30 feet deep near the concrete dam. This reservoir is no longer in use as a water supply source.



### Clear Creek Section

Figure 8 illustrates the existing infrastructure, facilities, uses, and circulation in the Clear Creek section of the park in close proximity to the Clear Creek Reservoir.

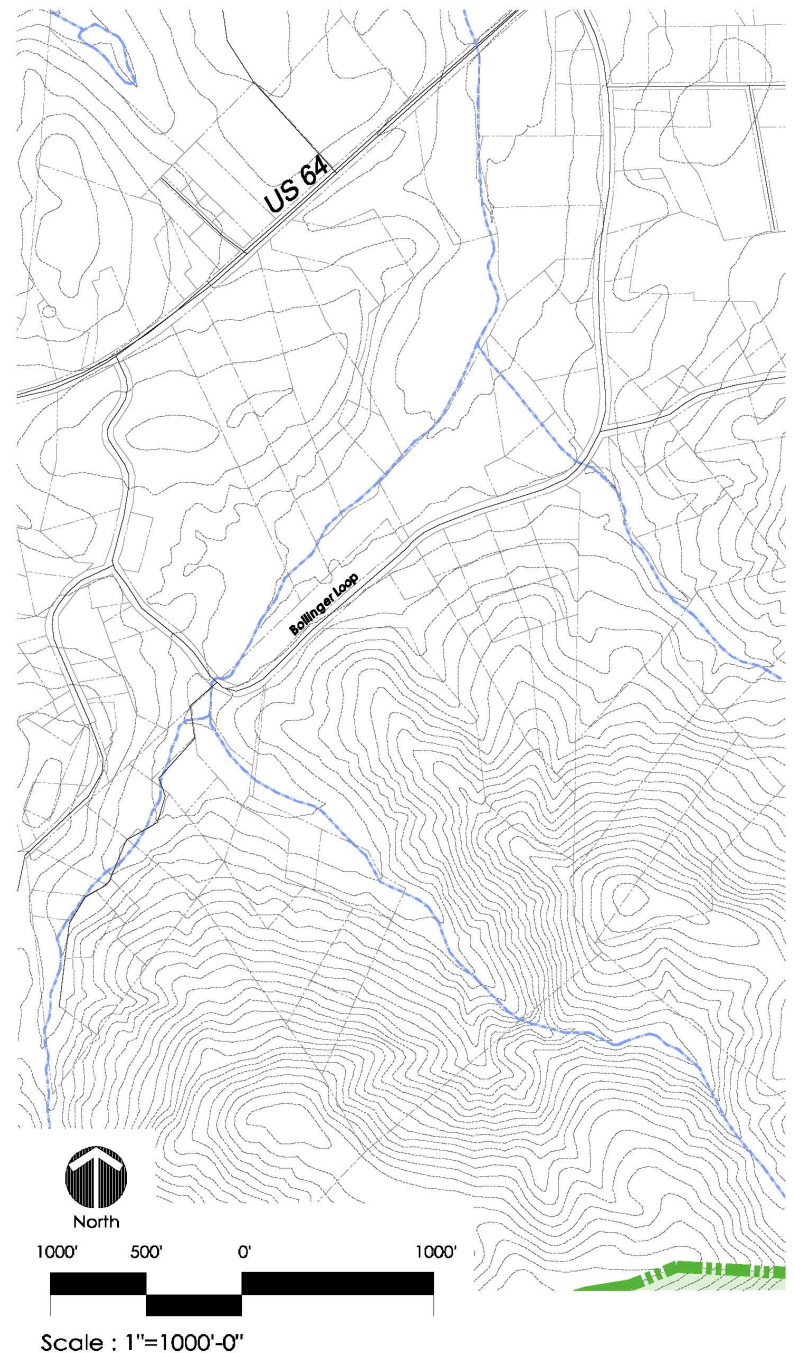
There are old roads and trails in this section of the park that have traditionally been used primarily by local residents for horseback riding and fishing access. The area currently is open as a day-use area only. It is served by a small gravel parking lot, with an approximate capacity for 10 to 14 cars. Fishing is allowed in this section per state regulations, and there is an interim 2½-mile trail that passes the reservoir and generally follows Clear Creek to a ridge.

There are two old reservoirs in this section of the park. The largest reservoir was formed by damming Clear Creek (Clear Creek Reservoir) and covers approximately 20+ acres. It was formerly the water supply source for Broughton Hospital. It is no longer in use as a water supply source. The spillway and intake tower were renovated in 2006 and 2007. There are several old buildings that were associated with the reservoir located in the vicinity of the dam.

The second reservoir in this section, Bailey Fork Reservoir, formerly supplied the School for the Deaf with drinking water. It was formed by damming Bailey Fork in the northernmost area of the park and is less than one acre in size. It also is no longer in use as a water supply source. An old, tree-damaged log cabin and associated outbuildings are situated near this reservoir.



Clear Creek Reservoir, July 2006





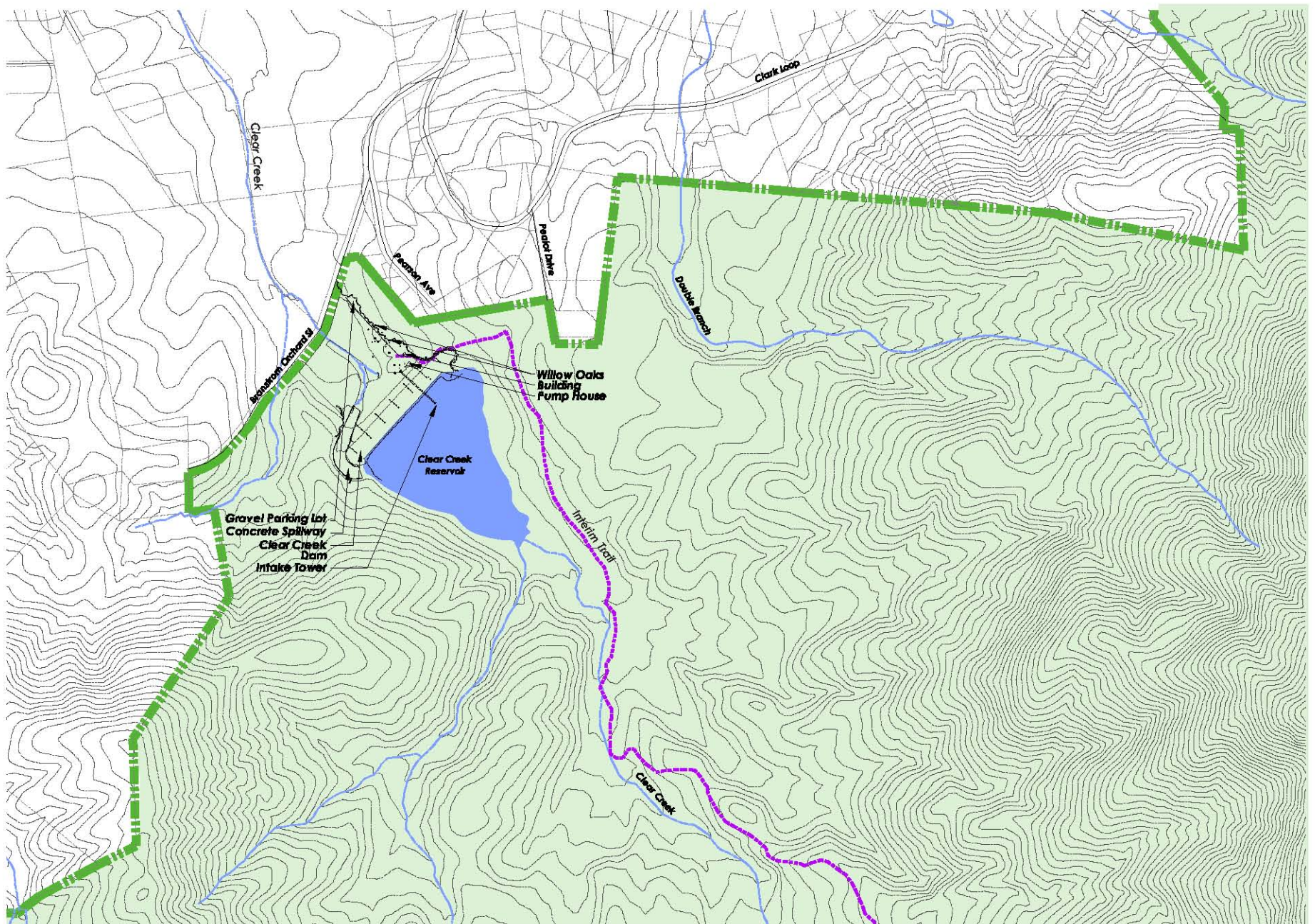


Figure 8: **South Mountains State Park Clear Creek Section**  
**Detail - Existing Infrastructure and Internal Circulation**  
 20' Contour Interval, January 2007